

Center City Connector Transit Study

Project Summary and Status Report - June 2013

Connect the streetcars through downtown,



connect neighborhoods



and everything in between.



The Transit Master Plan prioritized four corridors with the highest ridership potential and the greatest need for higher capacity transit service, including the Center City Connector. The goal of the Connector project is to link the South Lake Union and First Hill streetcars through downtown, and improve north-south mobility. While a significant amount of transit exists downtown, there is a growing demand for Center City circulation trips by visitors, casual users, residents, and employees. The Transit Master Plan recommended streetcar as the mode, and suggested 1st Avenue and a 4th/5th Avenue couplet for further analysis.

This planning study is primarily funded by a \$900,000 grant from the Federal Transit Administration, and is the first step in a larger process of going from concept to construction. Completing this alternatives analysis should put the city in a competitive position for future federal funding opportunities. The outcome of the study will be the selection of a locally preferred alternative, that will need public support and will be adopted by Council likely in early 2014.

To get there, SDOT and its consultant team are conducting a three-step evaluation process. The first step looked at a wide array of transit modes and street alignment options and evaluated them against the project's stated purpose and needs (consistency with local plans, mobility/connectivity, public support, transit capacity, and reduction in greenhouse gas emissions).

Stakeholder interviews in fall 2012, as well as input received at the project's kick-off open house in February 2013, informed what went into the initial screening. The project team evaluated streetcar, monorail, bus, and light rail modes. In addition to 1st and 4th/5th Avenues, 3rd Ave, Alaskan Way/waterfront, an extension down 1st Avenue into SODO, and an extension up 1st Ave into lower Queen Anne were evaluated as potential alignment options.

After evaluating these modes and alignments against the project's purpose and needs, several options were screened out – a streetcar on either 1st Avenue or a 4th/5th Avenue couplet remain. The second level of evaluation is wrapping up and will show how a streetcar operating in mixed-traffic and in exclusive right of way performs on both streets.

The June 6 open house will present results of the initial screening and the second level of evaluation. The purpose of the event is to present this analysis, show how each option performs and what the trade-offs are, and ask people to indicate which option they prefer and why. SDOT will use this feedback to inform the third and final level of evaluation. The June 6 event will be the second of three project open houses (the third is tentatively set for September).

www.seattle.gov/transportation/centercityconnector.htm